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The Lavon Affair

The year is 1954, the place Egypt. Gamul Abdul-Nasser, an army officer, overthrew the monarchy of King Farouk two years before. After ages of religious rule Nasser's regime is secular, though socialist, and he has the support of the Egyptian people. The United States government, ever unwilling to mind its own business, supports Nasser with foreign aid.

Israel fears a strong Egypt. David Ben-Gurion, now retired at his kibbutz (collective farm) after serving as the first prime minister of Israel, and Israeli military intelligence conceive a plan to turn the United States against Egypt. [*] Israeli military intelligence has already laid the groundwork: Israeli agents have infiltrated Egyptian society and recruited a dozen or so Egyptian Jews. These have been trained in Israel and deployed back in Egypt, the original idea being to create a fifth column in a future war against Egypt. But Ben-Gurion has another use for the spies: bomb American and British buildings and plant evidence implicating Egyptians, specifically a group called the Muslim Brotherhood which opposes Nasser's regime. The stupid Americans will think the Egyptians did it. In response the Americans will temper their support for Nasser.

Why would the Americans respond that way? – that is, why would the Israelis think the Americans would respond that way – is a matter for conjecture. Perhaps the Israelis believe that the Americans will think American support of Nasser is tearing Egypt apart, or perhaps that such a chaotic country ought never have control of the Suez Canal. In any case, Israeli military intelligence believes in this chain of events: terrorize the West disguised as Egyptians, let Egyptians be held responsible, sour the U.S. on Egypt.

A “false flag” operation. Run up someone else's flag and what you do gets blamed on them. [**]

Though the U.S. has no business propping up Nasser – it being neither in its interest nor the proper province of its government – Israel's proposed method of persuasion is deplorable. But at this point there is no one to deplore it.

The Israeli agents in Egypt are notified, and ten or so Egyptian Jews who had been recruited and trained (henceforth also called Israeli agents) are furnished with nitroglycerin

bombs and phosphorus incendiary bombs. The Israeli commanders code-name the operation “Shoshana,” that is, “Susannah,” after the fiancée of one of them. They agree that they will begin to strike when they hear Stephen Foster’s eminently American song “Oh, Susannah” played on Israeli radio.

It happens the summer of 1954. On July 2 the Israeli agents explode bombs inside the Alexandria post office. On July 14 in both Alexandria and Cairo they explode bombs inside the U.S. Consulate libraries, and would have done so inside a British-owned movie theater in Alexandria – except a wheel comes off the plan.

One of the Israeli commanders is Avri Elad. Originally from Germany, he had emigrated to what was then Palestine, which later became Israel. At the time of the Lavon Affair he is an Israeli military intelligence officer, working undercover as an Egyptian businessman. After helping set up the false flag operation, he betrays it to the Egyptian police (at least some evidence suggests this), and soon flees to Europe. His motivations appears to have been money rather than ideals.

Thus the Egyptian government had gotten wind of the Israeli terrorists before July 14 – one of their own handlers having betrayed them. A fire engine waits in front of the movie theater in Alexandria as an unrecognized Israeli agent approaches it. Now a bit of good luck – or bad luck depending on your point of view. The firebomb he is carrying in his pocket detonates, nearly killing him. The Egyptians arrest him and he eventually leads them to the other Israeli agents. On July 23 the Israeli agents still at large set off firebombs inside two Cairo movie theaters and in Cairo’s central post office and railway station. By July 27 all the agents are apprehended. One (or two, depending on accounts) commits suicide. Two Israeli commanders escape and flee back to Israel.

To the world, the Israeli government denies having been involved, saying Israel does not do such things, Israel is being persecuted, etc. (Extended quotes follow in the next section.) After details of the agents’ training in Israel come out during their public trial in Cairo, the Israeli government says the attack was a rogue operation unsanctioned by the Israeli government. It is telling, though, that the Israeli government does not punish any of the operation’s commanders, and later even rewards the Egyptian/Jewish agents, though officially ignoring them until ... but read on.

Political strife over the affair erupts among Israel's government officials, reminiscent of jostling Mafia dons. For a time Ben-Gurion (or his associates – see footnote referenced earlier), using forged documents, manages to make the Israeli Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon look responsible, and the attack becomes known as the Lavon Affair. However the truth eventually comes out, if the Israelis can be believed, and in 1960 Pinhas Lavon is publicly exonerated. Still, in the West this bungled false-flag operation continues to be known as the Lavon Affair.

The trial of the Israeli agents begins in Alexandria and ends in Cairo. By the end, two of the agents are acquitted and released, two sentenced to death by hanging, the rest sentenced to long prison terms. After their release they return to Israel where they are welcomed as new citizens by the government, and as heroes by much of the Israeli public. One becomes a Mossad (Israeli CIA) agent.

And what of Elad, the Israeli commander who seemed to have escaped first? Israel tricks him into returning to Israel, where he is arrested. After being tried by a closed-door tribunal he is sentenced to ten years in prison for having had contact with Egyptian intelligence subsequent to the Lavon Affair.

Even as ARI Watch was being set up, *the Israeli government officially honors the Lavon Affair terrorists*. On March 30, 2005 Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Moshe Ya'alon presented official citations to the three surviving agents and to representatives of those deceased, saying (quoted in the *Jerusalem Post* news article referenced below): “This is historic justice for those who were sent on a mission on behalf of the state and became the victims of a complex political affair.”

From their point of view the terrorist agents are not criminals but *victims* ! Victims, because the Israeli government had abandoned them.

Said one of them at the ceremony (quoted in the *Ha'aretz* news article referenced below): “This is a great day for all of us ... We are happy we've got our honour back.”

Honor ! Set aside the fact that no one can take away your honor, these terrorists had no honor *to* take away. But I willfully misunderstand. To them “honor” means any attempt

to advance Israel. As for Mr. Ya'alon's "historic justice," show us the justice in bombing your benefactors on the sly.

Another of the surviving terrorists expressed his gratitude for the belated recognition, recalling the wish of his now deceased comrades that the Israeli government would finally acknowledge their existence and heroism. Yet, according to the *Jerusalem Post*, "He still had one wish ... – for the true story, untainted by politics, to be taught in Israeli schools." Evidently depicting two-faced terrorists against the West as heroes to emulate.

ARI says: "Israel is our ally in the Middle East."

This is our ally?



The following reference contains amazing first hand source material which we quote at length:

Israel's Sacred Terrorism: "A study based on Moshe Sharett's Personal Diary, and other documents"
by Livia Rokach, Third Edition.

Sharett was Israel's foreign minister 1948-1956, and prime minister 1954-1955. The following is from chapter 7, "The Lavon Affair: Terrorism to Coerce the West." The chapter starts with a block quote:

'ONE. Start immediate action to prevent or postpone Anglo-Egyptian Agreement. Objectives are: one, cultural and information centers; two, economic institutions; three, cars of British representatives and other Britons; four, whichever target whose sabotage could bring about a worsening of diplomatic relations.

TWO. Inform us on possibilities of action in Canal Zone.

THREE. Listen to us every day at 7 o'clock on wavelength G.'

"This coded cable was sent to the Israeli spy ring which had been planted in Egypt many months before it was activated in July 1954. The ring originally was to serve as a fifth column during the

next war. The cable was preceded by oral instructions given by Colonel Benjamin Givii, head of Israel's military intelligence, to an officer headed for Cairo to join the ring. These instructions were:

‘[Our goal is] to break the West's confidence in the existing [Egyptian] regime The actions should cause arrests, demonstrations, and expressions of revenge. The Israeli origin should be totally covered while attention should be shifted to any other possible factor. The purpose is to prevent economic and military aid from the West to Egypt. The choice of the precise objectives to be sabotaged will be left to the men on the spot, who should evaluate the possible consequences of each action ... in terms of creating commotion and public disorders.’ [Footnote: “Both texts are reproduced from the Acts of the Olshan-Dori Inquiry Commission of the ‘Affair,’ annexed to the Diary, pages 659, 664, respectively.”]

“These orders were carried out between July 2 and July 27, 1954, by the network which was composed of about ten Egyptian Jews under the command of Israeli agents. ... [The dates in the next sentence seem to be confused.] The Israeli ring was finally discovered [July 14] and broken up on July 27 [correct], when [rather July 14] one of its members was caught after a bomb exploded in his pocket in Alexandria.

“On that same date Sharett [the prime minister], who knew nothing about the ring, was informed of the facts, and he began to collect evidence on the responsibilities of defense ministry and army officials. ... [On] October 5 ... Cairo officially announced the imminent trial of the arrested saboteurs. Sharett then fully supported the campaign launched by Israel to present the case as an anti-Jewish frame-up by the Egyptian regime. On December 13, two days after the trial opened in Cairo, the prime minister [that is, Sharett] denounced in the Knesset [Israel's Parliament] ‘the plot ... and the show-trial ... against a group of

Jews ... victims of false accusations.’ His party’s paper, Davar, went as far as to accuse the Egyptian government of ‘a Nazi-inspired policy.’ Horror stories of confessions extracted from the accused under torture circulated in the Israeli and international media.

I interrupt and skip to Appendix 4, “Moshe Sharett ... in his statement to Israel’s Parliament (... 13 December 1954):

‘Honorable Chairman, members of the Knesset. The trial that started two days ago in Egypt against 13 Jews is disturbing everybody and brings about an emotional turmoil and deep bitterness in the [our] country and in the whole Jewish world. Indeed, it must cause concern and anxiety in the hearts of all justice-seeking people around the universe. The Committee for Foreign Affairs and Security has already dealt and will further deal with this serious issue. But at this stage I feel obliged to make a short announcement. In my speech in the Knesset on November 15 I said

“The uncontrolled behavior of Egypt ... does not indicate ... that its leadership ... is seeking moderate approaches and peace. How far Egypt is from this spirit [of moderation and peace] can be learned from the plot woven in Alexandria, the show-trial which is being organized there against a group of Jews who became victims of false accusations of espionage, and who, it seems, are being threatened and tortured in order to extract from them confessions in imaginary crimes.”

This gloomy assumption was verified and was revealed to be a cruel and shocking fact, by the declaration of the accused Victorin Ninyo in the military court in Cairo that was published this morning. [According to this declaration] she was tortured during the interrogation which preceded the trial and by that torture they extracted from her false confessions to crimes which did not happen. The government of Israel strongly protests this practice, which revives in the Middle East the methods used by the Inquisition in the Middle Ages. The government of Israel strongly rejects the false accusations of the general Egyptian prosecution,

which relegates to the Israeli authorities horrible deeds and diabolic conspiracies against the security and the international relations of Egypt. From this stand we have protested many times in the past persecution and false accusations of Jews in various countries. We see in the innocent Jews accused by the Egyptian authorities of such severe crimes, victims of vicious hostility to the State of Israel and the Jewish people. If their crime is being Zionist and devoted to Israel, millions of Jews around the world share this crime. We do not think that the rulers of Egypt should be interested in being responsible for shedding Jewish blood. We call upon all those who believe in peace, stability and human relations among nations to prevent fatal injustice.’ ”

We continue with chapter 7:

“Sharett knew all this to be untrue.

‘In reality,’ he wrote in his diary on January 2, 1955, ‘except for the first two days of their arrest, when there was some beating, the treatment of our men was absolutely decent and humane.’

“... Then the true story came out, that the government propaganda had been false from beginning to end, that the terrorist ring was indeed planted in Egypt by the Israelis and the only frame-up in question was the one invented against Egypt by the Sharett administration.”

OK, maybe he lies to his diary. But either way, we have here one monumental liar!

By the way, perhaps you yourself would not call some temporary beating absolutely decent and humane, but then perhaps you are not an Israeli.

The complete text of the book can be found at:
msuweb.montclair.edu/~furr/essays/rokach.html

Reviews of the book can be found at:
www.amazon.com/Israels-Sacred-Terrorism-Documents-Information/dp/0937694703



Newspaper references quoted in the first section above:

“Egyptian-Jewish Spy Ring Gets Belated Salute”

The Jerusalem Post, March 31, 2005.

The article begins:

“Fifty years after an Egyptian court convicted them of being Zionist agents, and 37 years after their release from Egyptian prisons, Marcelle Ninio [aka Victorin Ninyo], Robert Dassa and Meir Zafran were accorded military ranks Wednesday in recognition of their service to the state and their years of suffering. The three are the last surviving members of Operation Susannah, an Israeli spy and sabotage network.

“Ninio and Dassa were promoted to lieutenant-colonel (res.) and Zafran to major (res.) in the Israel Defense Forces.

The article repeats the torture claim.

“Israel Honors Egyptian Spies 50 Years After Fiasco”

after *Reuters* in *Ha'aretz*, March 30, 2005.

The title is a bit misleading. The men Israel honored were spies and saboteurs recruited, trained, and commanded by Israel ; they were used by Israel against the West inside Egypt ; and getting caught in the act was no fiasco, the act itself was shameful.

The article does not repeat the torture claim, but does repeat the “rogue operation” claim.



For the view of an ardent Israeli, see:

“The Lavon Affair”

by Doron Geller.

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/lavon.html

This history – or fairytale – whitewashes Ben-Gurion and repeats the torture claim, and even the show-trial claim. This last makes no sense considering the author’s obvious approval of the terrorist attacks. If the men were the spies/saboteurs of whom the author is so proud, then they were guilty as charged. The following passage from the first paragraph reveals the tone:

“[The Lavon Affair] revolved around nearly a dozen highly dedicated young Egyptian Jews who were asked, and agreed to spy for Israel against the country in which they were born. Why they were caught and more or less abandoned by Israel to incarceration and for a while, torture in Egypt’s prisons to be finally released only 14 years later is a question that has never been answered. This story ... is thus one of idealism and self-sacrifice, as well as abandonment and an unwillingness to take responsibility.”

In the following we find the crazy reasoning behind the false-flag terrorist attacks, which reasoning the author obviously believes justified them:

“On July 2, 1954, they [the spies] went into action. They first blew up some post offices and a few days later, the American libraries in Cairo and Alexandria. These operations were to [he never tells us whom he quotes] ‘make it clear to the whole world that Egypt’s new rulers were nothing but a group of foolhardy extremists, unreliable and unworthy of taking charge of an asset as important as the Suez Canal. Furthermore, it was to be demonstrated that their grasp on power was uncertain, that they faced powerful internal opposition, and, consequently, they were unworthy of being counted upon as a dependable ally.’ ”

Regarding the spies who eventually died:

“Israel glorified them as martyrs. Their memory was sanctified. Neighborhoods and gardens were named after them in Israel, as were dozens of children born in the year 1955. At the same time it was not publicly conceded that they died in the service of Israel.”

So you are not confused if you read the whole essay, the author refers to Avri Elad as Avraham Seidenberg. A bit contrary to the account in *JTA* (see below), Elad first flees to Israel rather than Europe, then goes to Europe.



Other references:

“50 Years On, Lavon Affair Still Sparks Public Debate in Israel”

by Dan Baron, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)*, July 20, 2005.

This article repeats the torture claim.

The Gun and the Olive Branch: The roots of violence in the Middle East

by David Hirst. Excerpts at:

www.doublestandards.org/hirst1.html

Reviewed at:

www.amazon.com/Gun-Olive-Branch-David-Hirst/dp/0571219454

* There is no sure proof Ben-Gurion was involved, but he later acted as if he had been. After others discovered that Lavon had been framed he refused to order an investigation.

** Also called a “pseudo operation.” The technique is hardly confined to Israelis. However the Lavon Affair – and some of Israel’s other false flag operations we address elsewhere – stand out in that the perpetrator and its supporters insist that the perpetrator is its victim’s ally.